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Chair Bosh, Chair Wayne, and Members of the Nebraska
Committee on Judiciary
Room 1113, State Capitol, 1445 K Street
Lincoln, NE 68508

Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee,

The Joyful Heart Foundation strongly supports L.B.870 which expands sexual assault victims' rights in Nebraska. Every 68 seconds, someone is sexually assaulted in the United States. In the immediate aftermath of a sexual assault, a victim may choose to undergo a medical forensic examination to collect DNA evidence left behind in the assault. A doctor or nurse will conduct the examination, which can last between four and six hours. The examiner collects and preserves this evidence in a sexual assault evidence kit, often referred to as a rape kit.

LB870 grants victims the right to be notified 60-days before destruction of their sexual kit, as well as the right to further preserve the kit for an additional 20 years. This piece of legislation also grants survivors the right to be informed when there is any change in the status of the victim's case. Our [2016 research](#) on victim notification found that, for survivors who want to know about their case, not having access to such information can severely hamper healing from trauma. Survivors in our study asserted strongly that if they are afforded rights, provided information, and given options it can be very important to how they move forward. Survivor agency is key to healing. Access to information, including the fact that their kit is slated for destruction, can help survivors counter the loss of self-determination and control that is often at the core of a sexual assault experience. Joyful Heart recommends that victim notification policies should be created with the input of sexual assault advocacy organizations, such as the Nebraska Coalition Against Sexual Assault.

The Joyful Heart Foundation thanks you for your efforts to bring a path to justice and healing to all sexual assault survivors in Nebraska. We stand ready to assist you in enacting these necessary reforms.

Sincerely,

Mateo Cello
Policy Implementation Associate
Joyful Heart Foundation
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